



MOUNTAIN LAKE BIOLOGICAL STATION



Echoes

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

Produced by the University of Virginia's Mountain Lake Biological Station mlbs.org

Introducing our New Associate Director, Sandy Kawano!



The Station is excited to introduce our new Associate Director Sandy Kawano! Sandy was most recently an Assistant Professor at George Washington University, where she developed extensive experience mentoring undergraduates in research and leading her own research group. She brings recent success in grantsmanship, including earning a coveted NSF CAREER award in 2024, as well as a Keck Instrumentation Grant this year. Sandy will start as Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology in June, and will be at the Station for the start of high season. She also will take on directorship of the MLBS REU program that is now entering its fourth decade!

Sandy brings some new research expertise to the Station community. Her research focuses on the functional morphology and evolutionary biomechanics of animal locomotion, but she is broadly trained in evolution, ecology, organismal biology, and engineering and has conducted research at several field stations and natural history museums across North America. Her toolkit



includes microCT scanning, materials testing, and computational modeling of biomechanics, as well as field studies of behavior and physiology.

Sandy shared that "Building community and supporting the professional development of lifelong learners have been some of the most rewarding experiences of my career, and I look forward to meeting you all and learning more about your interests!" We all feel that she's a spectacular fit with the cultural and community values that make MLBS a welcoming and accessible environment for so many people every year. She brings a number of ideas and energy about new programs to engage students and recruit new researchers to the Station. Sandy invites you all to reach out at her new UVA email brr3p@virginia.edu.

This position, of course, opened with the retirement of our long-time Associate Director Eric Nagy. The search was gratifying but challenging, as we received over 60 applicants, many of whom were highly qualified in very different ways. We felt lucky to receive so much attention from capable and enthusiastic candidates.



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Upcoming Events

Dining Hall Open
May 16–August 2

REU Program
May 26–August 2

Summer 2025 Courses
Session I: May 26–June 13
Session II: June 23–July 11
Session III: July 14–August 1

Evolutionary Quantitative Genetics
Workshop
June 8–14

ArtLab
June 22–July 5

July 4th Festivities

Grant Writing Workshop
July 20–26

Evolutionary Biology Graduate Student
Workshop
July 27–August 2

View our [web calendar](#) for up-to-date
announcements.

From the Director

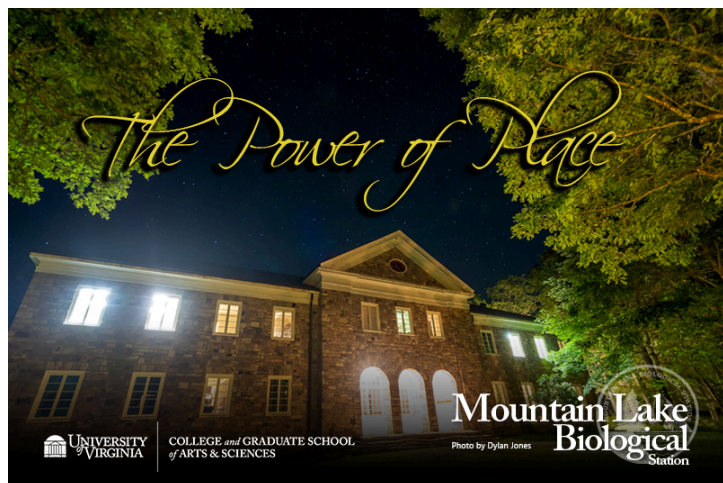
With the current cultural attacks on science and academia writ large, keeping a field station like MLBS thriving and its users protected has become more of a challenge than usual. As easy as it is to stare into the dark and dwell on all the negatives, I choose to focus on how lucky I am to be surrounded by colleagues that share the passion for MLBS. Mountain Lake runs through the efforts of a very small staff and the support of the University behind it. They for are the ones keeping things on the right track and picking up the pieces that I inevitably drop.

The last year has been a major challenge after the (well-earned) retirement of Associate Director Eric Nagy. He filled many roles for us, and the search for a new AD was necessarily long and careful (and ultimately quite successful as you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter). For unrelated reasons, we faced some major IT challenges in our data collection and application systems. For the better part of the year, this has meant that our core staff – Station Manager Jaime Jones and Departmental Manager Megan Champion – have had to cover gaps and fix new problems while being down a third of our staff. Both Jaime and Megan normally have completely full jobs that they handle with efficiency and positivity. I don't know how they did it, but they managed to pick up all these extra tasks and work with IT contractors to keep us functioning in a way that most users would never notice. I just wanted to publicly thank them for all they do behind the scenes and let them know that the fact no one notices is one of the biggest signs of their excellence.

As much as academics often like to paint "the administration" as adversaries, I'd be disingenuous if I did not note that the Station's parent units – the Department of Biology and the College of Arts and Sciences – have continued to support us at times when other field stations have felt significant financial pressures and even been forced to close. In a time with such uncertainty for institutions and research funding, the College continues to support our teaching and research mission in principle and action. The University's Facilities Management, who maintain and improve our physical infrastructure have likewise stepped up and provided support in ever expanding ways. Through the help of our Facilities Manager Chris Moye, the Station is looking and working better than ever.

So next time you're at the station, notice the work of our excellent team. We couldn't ask for better!

Butch Brodie

Click to support the programs at
MLBS by donating online!

MLBS Hosts the EQG Workshop

MLBS will become the new home of the annual Evolutionary Quantitative Genetics workshop that has been providing specialized training for over 20 years.

The EQG workshop has a long history of introducing the methods and theory of quantitative genetics to junior



Josef Uyeda, Virginia Tech

(and some senior!) scientists since its founding at the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center in Durham, NC in 2011. Over the years, the EQG workshop has brought some the leading minds in evolutionary genetics together with trainees for a short immersion course. Most recently the workshop was held at Friday Harbor Labs in WA.

The latest workshop is organized by Josef Uyeda (Virginia Tech) and Fabio Machado (Oklahoma State University). Uyeda has been involved with the workshop from its inception as a graduate TA, and later as an instructor. He is excited to pick up the mantle from the original organizers, Steve Arnold and Joe Felsenstein, who have stepped back from lead duties. The EQG workshop will continue to cover topics ranging from the quantitative inheritance and estimation of selection and surfaces, to how populations evolve on multivariate surfaces, and the bridge from micro to macroevolutionary diversity. Instructors have been



Fabio A Machado, Oklahoma State University

selected who will "build bridges between the traditionally separate disciplines of quantitative genetics and comparative methods, contextualize each other's research in the outstanding questions across scales, and learn cutting edge computational methods of analysis".

The EQG workshop will be held June 9-13 at Mountain Lake Biological Station. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and evolutionary biology

faculty members are invited to learn more and to register at <http://eqgw.github.io/index.html>.

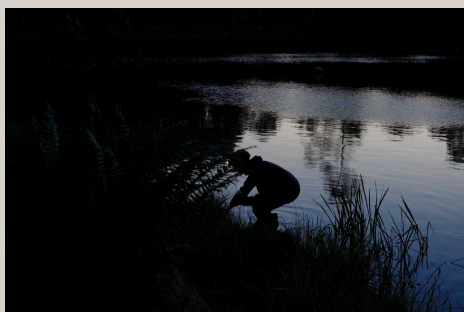
The Pond goes to New York City

As residents in the MLBS ArtLab in 2023, artists Stephen Vitiello, Ash Eliza Williams, and Meredith Leich found "an affinity in each other's work and sensibilities." In 2024, the group, known now as The Sensing Lab, returned to the Station to collaborate on a project. "[We returned]...the following year to explore, alongside the Station's biologists, the lives of animals, plants, and humans through sensory investigations: deep listening, underwater recording, and embodied performing. Ranging from perceptual to technological, our non-scientific observations included attempts to inhabit the worlds of other beings, while acknowledging their sensory limitations as humans."

The result of their collaboration is a sound/video piece titled *The Pond*, which they recorded at night in and around Riopel Pond. As they listened to the "distinct voices" bullfrogs, spring peepers, and other members of the amphibian choir, they also inadvertently observed research in progress: "On several occasions, we observed mysterious lights at night moving along the perimeter of the pond. Later, we learned these were scientists looking for frogs to tag and study. Drawn in by the evocative scene, we set up camp at the water's edge for four nights to sense the pond's activities and sounds, both human and animal, beneath the stars."

The Pond is "a quiet witness to and performance of the slow process of gathering scientific knowledge. It is also a record of attempts to experience the inscrutable sensory world of a frog: a biodiverse habitat which is becoming ever more rare."

The piece will be in an exhibition this summer on Governors Island, a 12-minute ferry ride from Lower Manhattan, on weekends from May 17 - August 24. The project will be hosted by media arts group [Harvestworks](#).



Photos by Meredith Leich

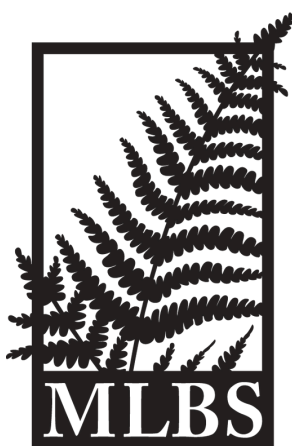


Mountain Lake Logo Redesign

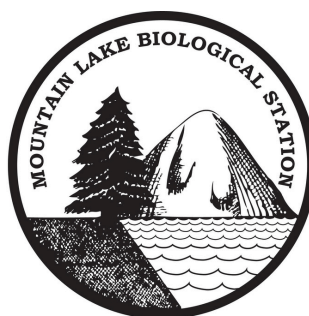
The MLBS logo has gotten an upgrade! The round graphic many Mountain Lakers are familiar with has existed since the mid-late 1900s. Several theories circulate about its origin, but the full story seems lost to time. This classic image of a mountain, evergreen trees and a lake became a recognizable, if not entirely accurate, representation of the Station, and served its purpose well for many years.

Last fall, the Station partnered with creative studio Iconograph, along with space management team from the College of Arts & Sciences, to reimagine the visual branding of the Station. The team undertook a months-long process to consider 1) how the logo might be redesigned to better capture the essence of the Station, and 2) how MLBS branding in general could better align with that of the University and its other field Stations.

The logo that emerged from this process calls to mind the large ferns that are so abundant at MLBS, which many Station users picture when they think back on their time here.



New logo



Old logo

The ferns are framed within a vertical rectangle reminiscent of the windows of Ruth Patrick Hall, the Station's most iconic building.

This creative effort also resulted in a new MLBS grounds map, designs for new signage, and other associated graphics that will be used for various applications. Keep an eye out for changes as these designs begin to appear on the MLBS website, printed materials, merchandise, and (at a later date) signage around MLBS grounds.





Summer 2025 Courses

3 credits each

Field Herpetology

May 26 – June 13

Christian Cox, Florida International University

We will focus on the ecology and evolution of reptiles and amphibians, leveraging their diversity in the southeastern United States. In the field and laboratory, we will study 1) evolutionary relationships among reptiles and amphibians, 2) key evolutionary innovations that characterize each major lineage, 3) reptile and amphibian systems in ecological and evolutionary research, and 4) location and identification of reptiles and amphibians.



Field Biology of Fishes

June 23 – July 11

David Neely, Tennessee Aquarium

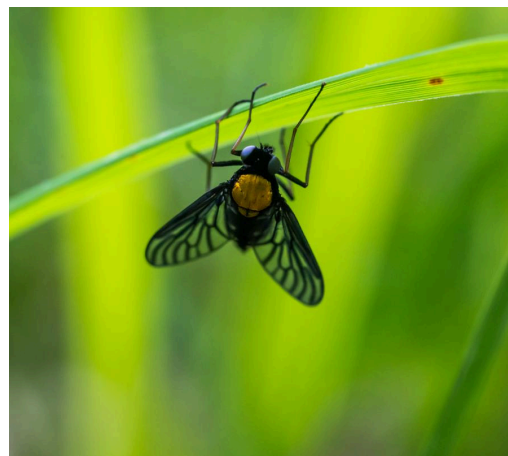
This class is an immersive introduction to fish biology, with a particular focus on the freshwater fish fauna of eastern North America. Students will develop proficiency in ichthyology through extensive field sampling and in-situ observation. Themes will include fish identification; patterns and drivers of diversity; interactions at individual, population, community, and ecosystem levels; evolution; and influences of human activities.

Field Biology of Insects

July 14 – August 1

Scott Villa, Davidson College

Insects are perhaps the most important animal group on the planet. Their enormous diversity makes them important models for understanding many concepts in biology. Students will leverage captive and wild populations of insects to understand fundamental questions in ecology, evolution, behavior, and disease dynamics. This course will teach students to design and execute field experiments, assess insect population distribution and health, and identify key ecological factors that determine species interactions. The course will also involve several field trips to varied habitats to allow students to collect insects and learn natural history.



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